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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

As in the days of Isaiah the plow, essential to war, is still a reminder of peace. For soldiers returning this spring to their native soil, the plowman is a fitting symbol of security and productiveness, since plowing is older than civilization. It was a very ancient art at the time of the Hebrew prophets.

Egypt, one of the three early civilized nations on earth, has left us the most complete record of agriculture. In the Nile Valley barley and wheat were grown before 5,000 B.C., and long before the use of copper tools. The draft plow with wooden plowshare was unknown at this primitive stage; but its invention before 3,000 B.C. caused a rapid increase in food production and the consequent development of a complex social organization with specialized industries. In the Egyptian galleries of the Royal Ontario Museum is exhibited an ancient wooden model of a plowman, whose plow is drawn by a team of cows. A wall painting in the same gallery shows a plowman of the 15th century before Christ. The metal plowshare was at that time an innovation but the form of the plow used to-day in the Near East has scarcely changed since then.

This year in Canada the knowledge of civilization's age-old dependence on the plow should help us to remember the importance of our farms during the coming period of reconstruction.

NIAGARA FALLS MOVING SOUTHWARDS

Niagara Falls means different things to different minds. To the newlyweds it spells "honeymoon." To the old woman of the joke it represents only "a turrible waste of water." To the geologists of the Royal Ontario Museum it poses an interesting problem of time and erosion.

Before the Great Lakes existed or the glaciers invaded Ontario, the Lake Erie basin was drained by a stream called the Erigan River. It is believed to have cut across to the Lake Ontario basin near Dundas. The glacier, advancing southward, scraped the Erigan Valley full of drift and when the last glacier left the region the old valley was sealed up. The Lake Erie basin filled up with water and spilled over the escarpment at Queenston. Niagara Falls originated at that time and the river began the cutting of its gorge which has required about 25,000 or 30,000 years. The falls are retreating up the river now at the rate of three to four feet a year, as established by a number of surveys. At this rate they would reach Lake Erie and start to drain it in about 45,000 years. This is a long time from the human standpoint, but very short in geological history. Man may delay the advance of the falls up the river by building protective works of some kind to decrease the rate of cutting of the Horseshoe Falls.

MUSEUM HOURS

Open Week-days except Mondays, 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Sundays 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.

CLUES TO MINERALS

Minerals, like men, are known sometimes by the company they keep. Take silver, for example. In the early 1900's when the railroad was being pushed northwards through Ontario to open up farming country, a beautiful pink colour—"cobalt bloom"—was observed on some rocks associated with silver. Prospectors swarmed into this country searching for "cobalt bloom" and the related silver. Likewise, copper minerals are frequently located because of the tell-tale green carbonate, malachite, which often forms on their exposed surfaces. Rusty-looking rocks have long been a place to search for gold because one of gold's most trusty side-kicks is the iron sulphide, pyrite, which oxidizes to iron rust. At Great Bear Lake it was not pitchblende which caught the eye of the prospectors, La Bine and St. Paul, but rather the beautiful array of colours—yellow, orange and green—displayed by the oxidation products of the pitchblende. Recognizing this, the prospectors staked what is now the great radium and silver mine of Canada. In the Royal Ontario Museum there are several exhibits devoted to displaying these and other minerals which are known by the company they keep.

JUNE BUG AN UNDERGROUND WORKER

The big, awkward June bug that bumps against you in early summer is really a scarab beetle with an interesting past. In May or June the full-grown adults come out of their subterranean burrow and mate. The eggs are deposited in the soil, where the whitish larvae or grubs hatch out. During their first summer they live on the vegetable content of the soil, just below the surface. In the winter they burrow to a depth of 3½ feet. In the second and third summers the larvae again come closer to the surface where they feed on the roots of grass and other plants. In this way they may cause much damage. After two full years spent underground, the larva pupates, and finally with the emergence of the adult, the cycle is complete.

Do not be misled by the blustery awkwardness of the adult June bug. It is a mask for a pestiferous enemy. Swat him,or if you can, jump on him.

DESIGN IN INDUSTRY

An exhibition of some noteworthy examples of fine contemporary design, as shown in textiles, ceramics, silver and jewelry, glass, leather and wood, will be held at the Royal Ontario Museum, May 17th to June 10th. Machinery has increased the technical and decorative scope of production and objects of beauty are available to all.

The aims of this exhibition are:

to make Canadians conscious of the design possibilities of their own materials;

to inspire and stimulate the study and application of original design in Canada;

to point out the opportunities for the study of design provided by the Royal Ontario Museum;

to show the place of the designer-craftsman in successful industrial production.

It is jointly sponsored by the Royal Ontario Museum and the Canadian Handicraft Guild (Ontario).